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ABSTRACT

At present, the theory of creative writing most widely used is based on the premise that personal writing contains dimensions for child growth. Recent research indicates that students taught from the creative model require the same degree of facility in writing skills as those students taught by the traditional method. Furthermore, students in classrooms where creativity is the basis of writing have a more positive attitude toward their teachers and toward writing than do students nurtured in the traditional method. This paper outlines a sequence of readings designed to aid the teacher or department chairperson who is interested in implementing the creative model in a classroom or department. A brief annotation is given for each of the several books listed under 10 headings: (1) Raising Questions, (2) Creativity Considered, (3) The Case for Creativity, (4) Creativity in Secondary English, (5) The Curriculum, (6) A Theory of Discourse, (7) The Open Classroom, (8) Creative Resources, (9) Practical Advice, and (10) Curriculum Guides. It is concluded that by drawing attention to the significant materials dealing with creativity in writing, the meaning and method of this term will become clearer. (TS)

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CREATIVITY IN WRITING:

A SEQUENCE OF READINGS FOR SECONDARY ENGLISH TEACHERS AND DEPARTMENTS

by

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Introduction

A study group on language and linguistics at the Anglo-American Dartmouth Seminar in 1966 stated, in their final report, that there existed in their group "a sharp difference of opinion" over the point "whether or not in teaching children the so-called 'productive' skills of reading and writing, it is necessary to teach language structure explicitly. On one side it is held that explicit teaching is unnecessary or even harmful; on the other, that without explicit teaching the child will not learn structure at all."[1]

The "explicit" camp held for teaching language structure by drawing the students attention to these matters through inductive exercises. The "implicit" school maintained that language and language structures are learned simply by using the language as listener, speaker and writer. Their methodology centers around the language involvement of the student as listener, speaker and writer. The explicit study of language by the "implicit" people occurs only when the spoken or written texts are examined in order to see the different functions which language can serve.[2]

This Dartmouth struggle was very emblematic of the different approaches to teaching English which the Americans and English used at the time. The British favored a student-centered approach,

placing much emphasis on the creative involvement of the student in language experiences. The pragmatic Americans had formulated an English curriculum which has been described as knowledge- or goal - or teacher-centered. Americans wanted to see the measured results.[3]

Since Dartmouth American English teaching has taken on some of the methods stressed by the British educators. In the area of teaching composition, creativity as a basis of student writing has been increasingly emphasized -- witness the growing literature on this subject both in books and articles dealing with teaching secondary English and in publisher's textbooks. In fact, it is to the point now where creativity in writing and what was known as creative writing are nearly synonymous. The theory of creative writing presently in vogue is based on the premise that personal writing contains dimensions for child growth which should be sought by those who are to provide a better environment for learning.[4] Creative expression by all students is considered to be good. As Stephen Judy has recently stated: "Any good piece of writing -- be it poem, play, essay, or even memo -- is creative because it grows from a writer's attempts to understand and synthesize his experiences, bringing together the events of his life in new ways."[5] This is the meaning of creativity in writing.

Though the creativity model in teaching writing is gaining in popularity, it has not achieved status as the "best" way of teaching writing. And it never may. To point to "rights"

and "wrongs" and "bests" in education is futile since education deals primarily with that relative and variable creature, the human person. But education can speak of "betters". And, at the moment, it appears that the creative model may be the "better" method of teaching writing than the traditional analytical procedures. Recent research indicates that students taught from the creative model acquire the same degree of facility in writing skills as those students still being trained in the traditional fashion. This determination has been made using testing instruments which evaluate the student in terms of the use and acquisition of traditional skills.[6] Thus, weighing the results of research on the analytical vs. the creative model, the scales are in balance vis-a-vis skill acquisition.

What weights the scales in favor of the creative model is attitude. Research indicates that students in classrooms where creativity is the basis of writing have a more positive attitude towards their teachers and toward writing than do students nurtured in the traditional fashion.[7] This attitudinal difference certainly needs consideration since the purpose of education according to the humanist psychologists and educators -- Maslow, Rogers, Friere and Holt -- is the growth of the human person. The possibility that a student can carry out of his school years a favorable attitude toward using language -- here writing -- and toward learning is a significant factor when considering which is the "better" method to employ when teaching composition. Paul Torrance, who, to date, has done more than any other

researcher on creativity, claims that "experiments have shown that children learn better through creativity than through authoritative teaching."[8]

The creative model presents an attractive approach to teaching writing. Many teachers may want to employ this method because of its increasing popularity or because the book materials the department chairperson just handed them to use with sophomores are formulated on the creative model or because the old methods just do not seem as effective as they used to be and this new creativity "stuff" seems to be working. But the teacher or department chairperson who wants to move in the direction of creativity in writing may not know how to move. The change from the traditional to the creative model of teaching English takes time because it necessitates a sizable shift and reorientation of a teacher's educational philosophy. What is outlined in the subsequent pages is a sequence of readings designed to aid the teacher and/or department chairperson who would like to implement the creative model in his classroom or department. This sequence of readings will enable the interested teacher to understand the philosophical, epistemological and psychological premises of the creative model; it will show him practical classroom practices and experiments. The sequence strives to highlight the contents of the books and articles as it goes.

At the end of this article a Primary Bibliography gives complete information on a book. The criteria of selection for the sequential-primary bibliography are several. Each and

subsequent titles were chosen to cover the field thoroughly and to avoid undue repetition. Some repetition ("repetitio est mater studiorum") was sought. The materials chosen are readily available -- in bookstores or through NCTE or through college and large public libraries or through ERIC.

The Selected Secondary Materials provide some titles which are suitable replacements for those in the Primary Bibliography if any of its titles are unavailable. These books and articles are also helpful to those teachers who wish to pursue the subject of creativity in writing even further. Some titles in the secondary bibliography aid the teacher in looking even more closely at the topics of creativity and of creative drama in the classroom.

It is hoped that by drawing the teacher's attention to the significant materials dealing with creativity in writing the meaning of this educational term and method will become clearer.

Raising Questions

Ken Macrorie's Uptaught (1970), a collage of his reflections and experiences, of student comments and writing, presents in a delightful format some of the seminal questions of the new English. He hopes to bury the corpse of the offspring of traditional English writing -- Engfish -- by introducing the "Third Way." The "Third Way" seeks balance between freedom and discipline in English composition -- between the freedom that says "write to express your feelings" and the strained discipline that chokes the writer's ability to express himself. Macrorie's book lets the teacher wonder that there are some other viable and realistic alternatives to the traditional teaching methods. He offers practical advice in speaking specifically about teaching composition, about evaluation, about experimental education.

John Dixon's Growth Through English (1967) was one of the two comprehensive documents which resulted from the Dartmouth Seminar of 1966 (the other is H. Muller's The Uses of English). Dixon's title suggests the thesis point of his book and of the Dartmouth Conference. Growth Through English articulates and explores (as do the subsequent titles in this article) the Dartmouth questions. Dixon covers the topics of language acquisition, classroom atmosphere, exams, continuity in the curriculum, teacher education, and experience-based education.

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Creativity Considered

Geoffrey Summerfield (1971) a British participant at Dartmouth, contends that all human beings are creative when allowed and encouraged to be so. He also believes that linguistic attainment is fostered by the use of language rather than by analysis.

He edited one of the Dartmouth Seminar Papers, Creativity in English (1968), which contains articles by David Holbrook, Reed Whittemore and himself. Holbrook reiterates some of Summerfield and Dixon's premises. He insists on creative activity to foster the growth of more articulate, more effective human people. He also gives practical pointers on how to equip and run a writing workshop that stresses creativity.

In one of the essays in this volume Summerfield provides a descriptive definition of creative English.

> "Creative English" is not for me a matter of simply eliciting verse or worse, but rather of establishing a relationship and an ethos which will promote experiment, talk, enquiry, amusement, vivacity, bouts of intense concentration, seriousness, collaboration, and a clearer and more adequate self-knowledge. This will involve us in talk about our selves, our language, our behaviour, our attitudes and beliefs, and, when appropriate, in recording such things in writing. And the teacher's sense of his role is crucial. If he is prescriptive -- knowing what he wants, knowing all the answers beforehand -- he will be less effective than if he is prepared to allow the pupils' awareness of criteria to grow for itself in the business of making, modifying, and so on.[9]

Rodney Smith's Creativity in the English Program (1970) approaches the question of creativity from the standpoint of research. He establishes some working definitions of creativity. The book covers creativity in the English classroom and relates

creativity to the various aspects of the language arts curriculum: literature, drama, language and writing. Particularly noteworthy are two bibliographies within the work: one on creative writing and one a general bibliography on creativity in English at the end of the book.

One of Paul Torrance's (1969) several books on creativity takes up the general nature of creativity. His short monograph describes creative behavior and methods of evaluating creativity. Of particular note are the numerous non-test procedures and techniques of assessing creativity. He also suggests methods of teaching for creative learning and indicates what parents can do to stimulate creativity in their children. His work, like Smith's, displays a helpful bibliography on creativity; his, unlike Smith's, is annotated.

Almost all of the documents pertaining to creativity speak of how this quality can be stimulated or given expression in the student. But what about the teacher? Art Berger (1973) argues that there is a need for the teacher to engage in creative writing experiences especially if he is going to be teaching writing. In teaching teachers a course on the teaching of composition, he had them engage in writing in a creative fashion. This is the same methodology Summerfield uses with teachers. The teachers found this enterprise liberating. The important benefit of such an experience is to instill confidence and conviction in the teacher. Having engaged in writing creatively, the teacher becomes credulous of his own creative abilities and of exercising those of his students.

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The Case for Creativity

Robert Parker (1972) is an example of the skeptic who was converted. He speaks of two camps of English teachers -- the "process" and "the product" people. He describes the "process" teacher as

> dissatisfied with conventional pedagogy, individual-centered, psychologically-oriented, non-authoritian, and relatively non-evaluative. Unconcerned with grammar or rhetoric (or systems of any kind), he believes that writing ought to grow naturally out of personal experience (and talk about experience), and that the writer should be free to find the form appropriate to those experiences which he cares to shape and express through writing. He believes that the primary audience for student writing is other students, and that the writer (if he wishes) ought to get helpful commentary on his thinking before he writes, on his writing before he finishes, and on his writing after he finishes -- with no grade given ever.[10]

In contrast the "product teacher conducts himself in this fashion. He

> is more complacent about conventional pedagogy, more group-centered, more authoritarian, and more apt to act as primary critic, evaluator, and preserver of standards. His concern is with certain principles of good writing, which he expects students to learn (master) and to apply in composition assignments which he generates. He tends to limit his students to written modes that are logical, impersonal and abstract derogating personal writing as sentimental, undisciplined, meaningless, and threatening.[11]

Having lived in both camps, Parker says that initially he was ready to opt for a happy balance between the two approaches. But finally he leans toward the process approach because he thinks that a proper focus on process will, quite organically, lead to the proper focus on product.

James Miller (1972) makes a passionate plea for creativity.

His conviction is this: the truly human being is the creative man. Thus he opts for an anti-curriculum in English which must be anti-traditional, anti-rigid, and anti-formal; and, on the other hand, it must be pro-human, pro-imagination, pro-creation. The growth of the student creatively and imaginatively is the goal of English.

Creativity in Secondary English

Miller's plea for creativity is a long-awaited echo of David Holbrook's first cry for creativity in 1961 with the publication of English for Maturity (revised edition, 1967). Holbrook contends education teaches a person how to earn a living and now how to live. English education should teach the "very culture of the feelings" -- the richness attached to the inner satisfactions of expressing one's humanity. English for Maturity, spanning the entire English curriculum, covers topics such as poetry, folksong, writing, reading, drama and drills. It is also a brief philosophy of English education with creative engagement at its base. In addition it is a practical guide on how to implement a creative philosophy of English education. Holbrook includes a hard-to-exhaust list of practical suggestions for classroom activities, for suitable books and records to use, for marking papers, for setting up a creative classroom, and for teaching spelling, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation. The book includes an extensive bibliography of professional resources, most of which are British.

If English for Maturity strikes the reader as humanely sensitive, Holbrook's companion work English for the Rejected (1968) will leave the reader speechless. Holbrook spent 18 months teaching "C" stream sixteen year olds, the so-called "dregs" of the English secondary system. This book is particularly helpful to American English teachers who deal with the non-college bound or remedial student. Holbrook deals comprehensively with how best to teach these students, formulating six rules to guide the teacher. He feels that creative involvement is the best medicine for these students. Having a history of failure, discouragement, and lack of school interests, the students are best dealt with through creative activities building off of their experience. Much of English for the Rejected is a documentation of this thesis point through examples of students writing and the comments of Holbrook on their work. The "C" streamers proved to be just as creative as the "A" streamers when encouraged and allowed to be so.

Like English for Maturity, this book has numerous practical suggestions, a bibliography of source materials and of professional resources -- again mostly British.

The Curriculum

From the American vantage point James Moffett's A Student-Centered Language Arts Curriculum, Grades K-13: A Handbook for Teachers (1968a) presents the most comprehensive guide to the secondary English teacher in pursuit of a creative model for the classroom. The book has four divisions according to grade levels: (1) K-3; (2) 4-6; (3) 7-9; (4) 10-13. The teacher using this

book needs to read up to and including the section that deals with the grade level he teaches. In order to teach Moffett's method, a teacher must have a whole view of the program. To encourage this, the book contains no index. In this curriculum the five basic language arts activities -- acting out, speaking, listening, writing and reading -- are interrelated.

The Handbook is sequential, describing the types of language activities suitable to particular grade levels. The curriculum is student-centered, building upon the experience of the student. The teacher's role is to guide and direct, coach, counsel and encourage.

All in all the Handbook is a smorgasboard of ideas for creative language arts. Intermingled in the text are references to professional aids and resources for the teacher. Placed in the teacher's hands, this book can provide numerous suggestions, hints and methods by which a teacher can take any English course on any level and underscore it with a creative philosophical base.

Alan Purves, working out of a behavioral perspective, calls How Porcupines Make Love (1972) a response-centered curriculum. Compiled and authored in parts by Purves, Porcupines is a good lesson to those who disbelieve that a competency based curriculum is incompatable or is opposed to a creative curriculum. The format, the suggestions and the method of expression of Porcupines are extremely creative. The accompanying behavioral objectives are occasionally slipped into the text of the book.

Most of Porcupines centers on the response from the student that the teacher is to elicit. Drama, film, talk, classroom

structure, writing, visuals and evaluation are topics dealt with by the several authors of the book. The concluding chapter is an annotated bibliography of "things, aids, sources, materials, advice and support information" for the teacher.

A Theory of Discourse

James Moffett's Teaching the Universe of Discourse (1968b) is the companion to his Handbook, supplying the theoretical basis of this book. The essays in this volume represent his efforts to theorize about discourse expressly for teaching purposes. The book is a theory of how a person learns to discourse. Moffett's theory of discourse is sequential. A student begins to discourse with interior dialogue, then vocal dialogue; he next moves from correspondence to personal journal to autobiography to memoir; then on to biography, chronicle and history; and finally into science and metaphysics. The progression is organic, from the simple to the more difficult -- from recording (the drama of what is happening) to reporting (the narrative of what happened) to generalizing (the exposition of what happens) to theorizing (the augumentation of what will or may happen).[12] Ideally the sequence of the curriculum (see Handbook) would correspond both to the student's own intellectual growth and to some significant progression in symbolic transformation.

Teaching the Universe of Discourse makes most sense to a teacher who is already familiar with or using the Handbook. The Handbook needs to be read and reread because the method of teaching implied within it is that of an open classroom.

The Open Classroom Atmosphere

Herbert Kohl's The Open Classroom: A Prictical Guide to a New Way of Teaching (1969) is a confidence-builder for teachers who may have misgivings about the open classroom method of teaching. By providing timely advice on how to plan, what problems to expect, how to achieve a proper balance between freedom and discipline, how to work with administrators, Kohl demonstrates that a teacher can use open classroom techniques in a traditional school setting.

In "Approaches to Writing" (1974) Kohl provides a clear example of how a teacher took the experience of his students and fashioned a creative curriculum in writing. This is a record of his personal experiences in New York -- a record of his fears and limitations as he implemented the open classroom plan in a ghetto school. Numerous pieces of student writing demonstrate his success in sparking creativity.

Creative Resources

The teacher can rely on some fresh sources of ideas to let run through his own creative teaching imagination. The Teacher and Writer's Collaborative Newsletter (published quarterly) offers creative suggestions for writing plus examples of student writing. Two special issues published by the Collaborative The Whole Word Catalogue (R. Brown, 1972) and Imaginary Worlds (R. Murphy, 1971) provide creative suggestions for and examples of student writing from an experience-based approach.

The English Journal initiated a new column in September, 1973 called "EJ Workshop". This column lays before the teacher suggestions from other teachers for creative activities in the classroom.

Singularly Practical Advice

Several articles have appeared in the past six years that spell out practical ways of implementing creativity in writing. Some of these are the results of teachers taking Moffett's suggestions in the Handbook and applying them to their particular teaching situation. There are seven articles which are representative of the quality and scope of the recent literature on the subject.

Richard Beach (1973) claims that students store a wealth of experience that needs to be explored in writing. They need unstructured writing situations to help move their covert rehearsal (the inner speech that prepares the student for over expression) into the written realm of overt expression. Beach suggests five classroom activities to initiate this movement.

John Bennet (1972) suggests a method of getting students just to write -- to eliminate any timidity they may have toward this activity. His approach, like those seen previously, is experience-based.

Rollyn Osterweis (1968) presents a method of stimulating writing by using pictures from The Family of Man. The author finds that such a method stimulates creativity in students' writing.

Joyce Carroll (1972) clearly and fully explains what a student journal is about and how to encourage and advise students who have previously had bad experiences with journals. Carroll provides a long list of "do's" and "dont's" -- very practical advice for the teacher which enables the teacher to build confidence in the possibility of using the journal with some, several, or all students.

Stuart Shelley (1969) makes the ambitious claim of being able to turn students into poets. His article, like the others mentioned above, is practical advice from the teacher. He enumerates four reasons why a teacher should ask the student to write poetry and presents eight steps in the process of guiding their writing. Not expecting to turn out Shakespeares, Sheeley believes the wrestling with language, which the writing of poetry requires, makes the student more sensitive to the language he uses in other writing experiences.

Agnes Pastva (1973) outlines another method of stimulating a student to write creatively. Pastva details several steps and several tips the teacher can employ during a writing workshop. And Allan Glatthorn(1973) finds that student creativity is tapped and allowed to come out especially through work in small groups.

Curriculum Guides

James Moffett suggests that"as an exercise in clear thinking it might be a helpful thing for English teachers to write behavioral objectives -- and then throw them away."[13] Two of the many

curriculum guides which have come out in the past three years attribute much of their inspiration to Moffett's K-13 Handbook. Marlene Knowles (1971) put together a nine-week course in creative writing. It is a workshop course for high school students interested in writing articles, biographies, auto-biographical anecdotes, sketches and humorous essays.

Clark County School District (Language Arts, 1972) published a K-12 curriculum guide. This flexible student-centered curriculum concentrates on developing a student's ability to find out information for himself in an atmosphere of responsible freedom. The guide is not arranged according to grade levels, rather it contains ten subject matter "strands": language, listening, speaking, literature, critical thinking, reading, writing, media, spelling and imagination. The guide also states a reasonable number of behavioral objectives.

The value of looking at someone else's curriculum guide is to stimulate the teacher's imagination as he approaches his classroom enterprise. The value of writing out one's own course guide is as an exercise in clear thinking about the teaching project. Then throw it out and rethink the course for the following year.

There remains one more curriculum guide and packet worthy of note. It is the Houghton Mifflin Interaction: A Student Centered Language Arts and Reading Program authored by James Moffett and thirty-two other teachers. Interaction is packaged materials ready for the teacher or department which wants to

implement the methods and philosophy of the K-13 Handbook. It is a curriculum completely dedicated to creativity in all aspects of the language arts. The bibliographic sequence of this article would be a timely help to teachers and departments interested in using Interaction.

The Overwhelming Question

Any teacher who has to fill out his IBM grade cards by now has asked the "overwhelming question:" how do you grade creativity in writing? Stephen Judy (1973) offers a method of assessing student writing in which he outlines and describes seven checkpoints. In short, it is the teacher's responsibility to first respond in a human and honest fashion to the student's writing; then, later in the development of a student's paper, to aid in the editing of the composition as the piece of writing moves into the public forum of being read by other students or being placed in a class or school literary magazine.

Judy sketches one specific method of evaluating writing. A broader consideration of evaluation is the 1972-73 issue of "Classroom Practices in Teaching English" (Berger, 1972). This monograph contains 42 articles on the subject of assessing student work. Several of the articles deal specifically with evaluating the writing of students and offer a variety of approaches.

Conclusion

There is no one set way of describing creativity in writing or just what the teacher of such an approach looks like. Each teacher using this method must search out a mode of implementation with which he and his students are comfortable, given their

individual personalities.

The teacher who wishes to teach writing from a creative standpoint must believe that the method is possible and that it is a "better" approach to writing. Being able to teach creativity in writing takes time, patience, experimentation, success, failure, more time, more patience, more experimentation, rereading, checking the new articles in journals, talking with others, and an on-going reflection first upon the materials written on creativity in writing and second upon the actual teaching of creativity in writing.

FOOTNOTES

[1]"Working Party 5 and Study Group 8: Final Report," Language and Language Learning (Dartmouth Seminar Paper) edited by Albert Marckwardt. Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1968. p. 57.

[2]Ibid., pp. 69 and 72.

[3]Dan Donlan, "Backward Glance at Dartmouth" English Education 5 (February/March, 1974), p. 189.

[4]Rodney P. Smith, Jr., Creativity in the English Program. Champaign, Ill.: NCTE, 1970. p. 75.

[5]Stephen Judy, "Editor's Page", English Journal 62 (Dec., 1973), p. 1221.

[6]Vernon A. Adams, A Study of the Effects of Two Methods of Teaching Composition to Twelfth Graders. Ph.D. Dissertation University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1971; Mary F. Lovern, Guidelines for the Pursuit of Full Humanity in a Secondary English Program. Ph.D. Dissertation, The Ohio State University, 1972.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Paul Torrance, Guiding Creative Talent. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962.

[9]Geoffrey Summerfield, "A Short Dialogue on Some Aspects of That Which We Call Creative English," Creativity in English edited by Summerfield. Champaign, Ill.: NCTE, 1968. p. 44.

[10]Robert P. Parker, Jr., "Focus on The Teaching of Writing: On Process or Product," English Journal 61 (Dec, 1972), p. 1328.

[11]Ibid., p. 1329.

[12]James Moffett, Teaching the Universe of Discourse. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1968. p. 47.

[13]James Moffett, "Misbehavorist English: A Position Paper," On Writing Behavioral Objectives in English edited by J. Maxwell and A. Tovatt. Champaign, Ill.: NCTE, 1970. p.111.

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